

# VIEW B - BUILDING

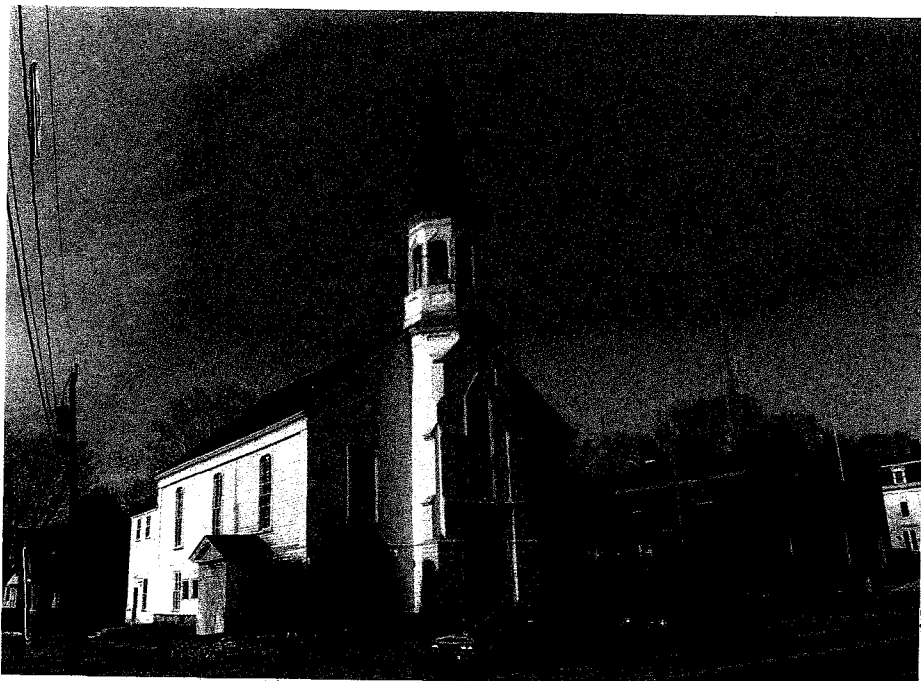
MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION  
80 BOYLSTON STREET  
BOSTON, MA 02116

AREA

FORM NO.

C

303



Town Acton

Address 250 Central Street

Historic Name West Acton Universalist

Church

Use: Present theater

Original church

## DESCRIPTION

Date 1868

Source Phalen

Style Gothic Revival

Architect unknown

Exterior Wall Fabric clapboards

Outbuildings none

Major Alterations (with dates)

rear addition (early 20th c)

Condition Good

Moved no Date

Acreage less than one acre

Setting On a residential street, adjacent to West Acton village, among a row of

houses built between 1840 and 1900.

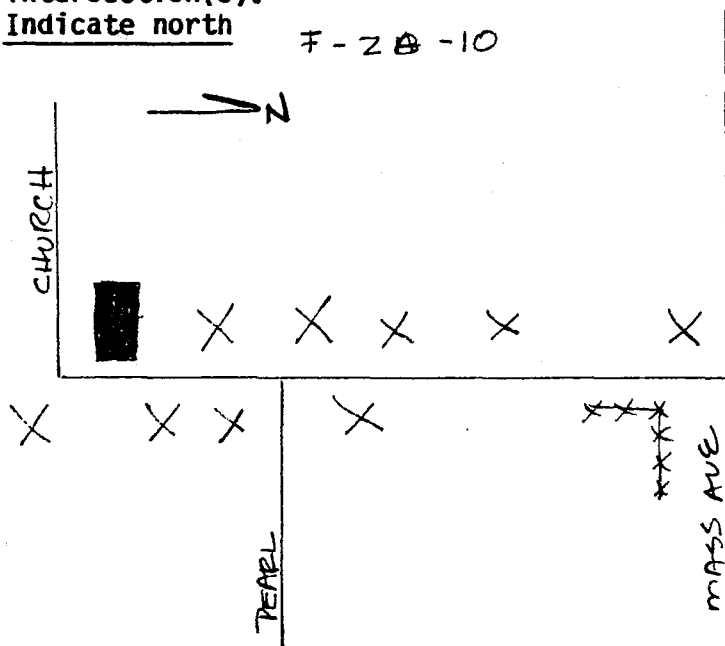
Recorded by Schuler and Johnson/A. Dodson

Organization Acton Historical Commission

Date May 1990

Sketch Map: Draw map showing property's location in relation to nearest cross streets and/or geographical features. Indicate all buildings between inventoried property and nearest intersection(s). Indicate north

F-2A-10



UTM REFERENCE

USGS QUADRANGLE

SCALE

**NATIONAL REGISTER CRITERIA STATEMENT (if applicable)**

**ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCE** Describe important architectural features and evaluate in terms of other buildings within the community.

See Inventory Continuation Form

**HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE** Explain the role owners played in local or state history and how the building relates to the development of the community.

See Inventory Continuation Form

**BIBLIOGRAPHY and/or REFERENCES**

Phalen, History of the Town of Acton  
Interview/ A. Dodson

INVENTORY FORM CONTINUATION SHEET

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION  
Office of the Secretary, Boston

Community:

ACTON

Form No:

C-303

Property Name: 250 Central Street

Indicate each item on inventory form which is being continued below.

250 CENTRAL STREET / HISTORICAL DESCRIPTION:

This church was built in 1868 by the West Society of the Universalists in Acton. The West Acton Universalist Church was the second church built in West Acton. It followed the construction of the West Acton Baptist Church in 1854 (see 592 Central). This building served as a church until 1925 when it was purchased and donated to the West Acton Women's Club. The church is now used as a local stage theater.

The first Universalist Society of Acton was formed, with eleven members, in 1816. Legally incorporated in 1821, with fifty paying members, the Society met in private dwellings in the 1820s. In the late 1830s, the Universalists worshipped in the First Parish Church in Acton Center. During the late 1850s, Universalist societies gathered in West and South Acton. The West Acton Universalists met in Robinson's Hall, later Grand Army Hall (demolished). In 1868 the West Acton society built the church at 250 Central. Reverend Edwin Davis headed both societies from 1864 to 1871. He was followed by Reverend I.C. Knowlton, who lived next door at 249 Central (see form) and was pastor to both societies from 1875-1892. In 1876, a group of thirty persons was formally organized into the West Acton Universalist Church.

By 1925, the church was no longer used for religious purposes. It was purchased the same year by Arthur Blanchard (see 56 Windsor), George C. Wright (see 615 Mass Ave), and George V. Mead (see 568-576 Mass Ave), who gave the property to the West Acton Women's Club begun by Mrs. Lucy Mead in 1890 (see 264 Central). In the 1950s, the Church was used as a community center with the first adult education program in Acton. It currently houses a local theater.

Central Street was known, before 1735, as the "Road from Concord to Stow" then by 1766 as the "County Road." Close to the village center, Central Street was settled with modest mid-century houses erected after the 1845 arrival of the railroad. In the latter decades of the 19th century, development on Central Street extended further south along the road and included larger dwellings. Unlike the high style houses built on Windsor Avenue, most of the houses on Central were simply designed. During this period, West Acton's manufacturies included the Hall Brothers Pail and Churn Factory, nearby on Central (230-236), the Knowlton Cigar Factory (525 Mass Ave), E.C. Parker and Co. grain and grist mills (see 239 Arlington), and others.

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INVENTORY FORM CONTINUATION SHEET

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION  
Office of the Secretary, Boston

Community:

ACTON

Form No:

C-303

Property Name: 250 Central Street

Indicate each item on inventory form which is being continued below.

250 CENTRAL STREET / ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION:

The Universalist Church at 250 Central Street exemplifies the influence of the Gothic Revival and Italianate styles on rural church design during the 1850s and 1860s. Although a two story addition has been added to the rear of the building, the church is very well preserved.

The basic design is in keeping with the classical tradition of 18th and early 19th century American churches, i.e. a rectangular block with a pitched roof and a frontal tower. Here, however the hipped roof tower has a rounded form, and the octagonal belfry is topped by a tall spire, indicating the use of Gothic forms. The building has a granite foundation. The side walls are clad in clapboards at the upper stories, with "rusticated" wood (made to look like stone) below. Wood flushboard on the front facade and tower is also intended to imitate stone. Wide unadorned corner boards articulate the corners of the main block. Windows flank the central tower and three line the nave. Predominately a Gothic Revival design, Gothic details include the double pointed arch windows with quatrefoil ornament, buttresses and pointed arch panels on the tower, and pointed arch paneled openings in the belfry. Italianate influences are seen in the windows lining the nave, the rusticated base, the corbel table at the eave, and the paneled base of the belfry. A small pedimented entry porch projects from the north side of the church.

West Acton's churches include this Gothic Revival style building, the Italianate style West Acton Baptist Church, built in 1854 (see 592 Mass Ave), and English Parish style, St. Elizabeth of Hungary, built in 1913 (see 543 Mass Ave).

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